China's Image Cultivation through Cultural Diplomacy: An Assessment of the Impact of the Confucius Institutes on Kenyan Publics' Perception of China

Gideon Kimayo and Patrick Maluki

University of Nairobi, Kenya

Abstract: **This article examines China's image cultivation through cultural diplomacy. It focuses on the Confucius Institute (CI) in Kenya with a view of conceptualizing the impact of these institutes on the Kenyan public's perception of China. The article pivots on the soft power theory and applies a mixed methods approach comprising quantitative and qualitative research. As such it uses positivist and interpretivist methods. The data for this study was collected using a semi-structured questionnaire. The informants were 400 Kenyans from ten cohort categories; government ministries, media, private sector (informal business), private sector (formal business), universities, religious organizations, civil society, county government, security sector and political parties. The results indicate that CI has had a diminutive impact on the enhancement of China's national image among the Kenyan public from all categories. This shows that China's cultural soft power projection through the CI demands improvement, especially to encourage Kenyans to attend the institutes.**

Keywords: **Soft Power, Public Diplomacy, Culture, Cultural Soft Power, Public Perception**

I. INTRODUCTION

China has heighted its cultural relations with African countries at least since the early 21st century. Following the first Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) of 2000, China has deepened its cultural operations with African states. On 24 October 2000, China hosted the New Century China-Africa Cultural Exchange Symposium attended by the representatives of 22 African countries and the Organization of African Unity (OAU).[1] Since 2000, cultural cooperation between China and Africa has featured strongly in subsequent FOCAC meetings including at the Addis Ababa Summit and the 2006 Beijing summit of 2006.[2]

In 2004, China held the African Thematic Year in which China carried out such events as "Chinese Culture going to Africa".[3] In 2005, China held an International Symposium on African Chinese Music in Beijing. In the 2006, China spent 5 to 6 million Chinese Yen (CNY) of its official budget in the FOCAC summit held in Beijing.[4] It is arguable that cultural diplomacy of China has become a key aspect of its public diplomacy. In that year, China's Ministry of Culture unveiled the African Cultural Visitor program specifically designed for ten African countries to facilitate cultural cooperation between China and Africa.[5]

Nonetheless, China's "charm" offensive in Africa has been greatest through the Confucius Institute (IC).[6] The Confucius Institute (IC) is perhaps the most evident indication of the institutionalization and internationalization of cultural diplomacy in China. The CI replaced the erstwhile National Office for Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language (NOCFL); the *Hanban* was established in 1987.[7]

Since it was established, the CI has defined the agenda of China's official documents including the National Outline for Medium and Long-term Education Reform and Development (NOMLERD) of 2010-2020, and the Ministry of Education's current decade-long plan.[8] The CI has been the framework through which China has managed its cultural diplomacy and cultural exchanges with Africa. It has become the most potent means through which China has projected its cultural soft power in Africa. Ding and Saunders[9] opine that the CI is a fundamental component of PRC's soft power geared towards shaping opinions and attitudes toward China's cultural materials and assets, and in so doing, enhancing the national image of China among foreign audiences. As of 2016, Beijing

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[1] Haifang Liu, "China-Africa Relations through the Prism of Culture – The Dynamics of China's Cultural Diplomacy with Africa" *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs,* (2008), 20

[2] Hui-Ping Tao, "China's Expanding Cultural Influence in the Age OF Globalization: A Case Study of the Chinese Media in Kenya" (2018). *Doctoral Dissertations.* 1410, 63

[3] Haifang Liu, *Op Cit.* 17

[4] Ibid. 20

[5] Ibid. 26

[6] Liu *Op. cit.,* 10

[7] Wu You, "The Rise of China with Cultural Soft Power in the Age of Globalization," *Journal of Literature and Art Studies,* Volume 8, Number 5, (2018), 767.

[8] Teresa Ann Shoemaker, "Confucius Institutes in Context: An Investigation of Chinese Soft Power." IRG 678 HB International Relations and Global Studies The University of Texas at Austin Submitted for the Plan II Thesis Requirement (2017), 15

[9] Sheng Ding and R. Saunders, "Talking Up China: An Analysis of China's Rising Cultural Power and Global Promotion of the Chinese Language", East Asia, Volume 23, Number 2 (2006), 4

had established 48 CIs and 33 Confucius Classrooms in African countries.[10] Kenya is arguably the epicentre of CI activities in Africa since out of the 48 CIs in the continent 16.7 per cent(8 CIs) are located in Kenya.[11]

The use of CI is strategic; these institutions are to disseminate Chinese language abroad and promote an understanding of China's cultural values and offering to foreign publics. Additionally, they are to present a "correct" image of China, hence they are charged with the development of positive opinions and attitudes abroad.[12] Maddalena Procopio[13] studied the CI's effectiveness in the projection of the soft power of China in South Africa between 2012 and 2014. Maddalena's study, which sampled executives, particularly cultural centers and CI managers (including local and Chinese cultural directors), and teachers, established that the CI and the cultural centers have been ineffective in projecting China's soft power in South Africa.[14] The fundamental question that this article asks is, have the CIs in Kenya succeeded in cultivating a positive image of China among Kenyan audiences?

This article examines China's image cultivation through cultural diplomacy. It focuses on the Confucius Institutes (CI) in Kenya with a view of conceptualizing the impact of these institutes on Kenyan public's perception of China. It argues that China's cultural diplomacy has minuscule impact on Kenyan's perception of China. The article pivots on the soft power theory and applies a mixed methods approach comprising quantitative and qualitative research. As such it uses positivist and interpretivist methods. It commences with an examination of extant scholarly sources on culture, soft power and public diplomacy.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Culture is an essential component of modern diplomacy since it acts both as a "function and a source of identity".[15] Culture is etymologically derived from the Greek word *'cultura'*, which translates to grow and to cultivate. The Geert Hoftede defined culture as the "software of the mind" that underpins how humans behave, interact and think, and it is a tool for problem solving.[16] Culture, according to Sir Edward Burnett Tylor, who was the originator of cultural anthropology, incorporates knowledge, art, belief, law, custom, moral and other

capabilities.[17] Guy Faure and Jeffrey Z. Rubin[18] consider culture as a range of enduring connotations and shared values, norms, traditions and beliefs of group sharing a common origin, language and destiny.

According to Joseph S. Nye Jr. the power of a states is located in at least three sources; foreign policies, political and ideological norms, and cultural values.[19] In this regard, culture is an intangible asset that makes up soft power. Nye Jr., conceived soft power as referring to one's ability to appeal to and attract others to desire what one wants.[20] As opposed to hard power, which is resident in a country's coercive means including military, political and economic resources, soft power pertains to the attractiveness and appeal ability of a state.[21] It is a conditioned and co-optive power that states can cultivate to shape foreign publics' opinion favorably towards the state.[22] It is through public diplomacy (PD) that states attempt to project their soft power and for this reason it can be argued that public diplomacy is the vehicle upon which soft power is projected.

Public diplomacy is a concept, a term, a practice and a multidisciplinary field of enquiry.[23] Public diplomacy is etymologically tied to ancient Rome and Greece. The Romans discerned *res publica* as separate from *res priva*, the ancient Greeks discerned *Idion* (private) from that which is public (*Koinion*) in their *polis*.[24] These conceptions of the distinction between private and public has underpinned modern understanding of public diplomacy. Unlike traditional or conventional diplomacy, the target of public diplomacy is both the specific sectors of foreign publics and political elite in the referent state.[25]

David Welch conceptualized public diplomacy as the premeditated or deliberate endeavor to sway the opinions foreign target audiences via the broadcast of values and ideas for particular goal(s), deliberately designed to advance the desires of the propagandist and their political backers and masters.[26] In this way, a distinction is explicit between traditional diplomacy conducted between formal state agents and public diplomacy conducted between state actors and foreign publics. According to Ross[27] public diplomacy

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[10] Tao, Op. cit., 65

[11] Ibid. 65

[12] Falk Hartig, Confucius Institutes and the Rise of China," Journal of Chinese Political Science, Volume 17, Number 1, (2012), 63

[13] Maddalena Procopio, "The Effectiveness of Confucius Institutes as a Tool of China's Soft Power in South Africa." African East-Asian Affairs, Is 2 (2015), 98 – 125.

[14] Ibid. 98

[15] Sofia Kitsou, "The Power of Culture in Diplomacy: The Case of U.S Cultural Diplomacy in France and Germany", Exchange, the Journal of Public Diplomacy, Volume 2, Issue 1, Article 3, (2013), 22

[16] Geert Hofstede, Dimensionalizing Cultures: The Hofstede Model in Context. Online Readings in Psychology and Culture, Volume 2, Number 1, (2001), 3 – 26.

[17] Sir Edward Burnett Tylor, 1

[18] Fauré, Guy Olivier and Jeffrey Z. Rubin (eds.) Culture and Negotiation. (London: SAGE Publications, 1993), 3

[19] Joseph S. Nye, Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics. (New York, NY: Public Affairs, 2004), 4

[20] Joseph S. Nye, Jr., "The Changing Nature of World Power", Political Science Quarterly, Volume 105, Number 2, (1990), 181.

[21] Joseph S. Nye, Jr., "The Changing Nature of World Power", Political Science Quarterly, Volume 105, Number 2, (1990), 181

[22] David Coopeland, Guerrilla Diplomacy: Rethinking International Relations. (London, UK: Lynne Reinner Publishers, 2009), 162

[23] Nicolas J. Cull, "Public Diplomacy before Gullion: The Evolution of a Phrase. (London, UK: Routlge, 2008), 20

[24] Caroline Ashcroft, The *Polis* and The *Res Publica*: Two Arendtian Models of Violence, *History of European Ideas,* Volume 44, Issue 1 (2018), 128 -129

[25]Christopher Ross, "Public Diplomacy Comes of Age". The Washington Quarterly. Volume 25, Number 2 (2002), 75

[26] David Welsh, "Power of Persuasion." History Today, Volume 49, Number 1 (1999), 24

[27] Ross, Op. CIt. 75

principally deals with non-governmental persons and organization through a more intricate communication.

Edward E. Murrow conceptualizes public diplomacy by comparing it with the traditional diplomacy, and considered PD as the diplomatic activities that incorporate interactions with non-government agencies and individuals.[28] PD deploys several methods and instruments in order to project the soft power attributes of the state. Nicholas J. Cull identifies at least five instruments of public diplomacy; advocacy, listening, educational exchanges, international broadcasting (media) and cultural diplomacy.[29]

This article deals with the latter, cultural diplomacy. The term cultural diplomacy first appeared in diplomacy literature when an American researcher, F. Barghon used it to refer to the manipulation of the cultural materials of a state to realize the aims of propaganda.[30] The cultural material that is manipulated and shared includes but is not limited to language, art (including performing arts), music, traditions and information.[31] From this understanding, scholars have referred to "cultural soft power".[32]

Cultural soft power is considered to be crucial for countering damage to cultural heritage[33] and national image. Walter Lippman explains that images are mental pictures of reality, that is, an image is a person or a groups depiction of reality or their simplification of the environment.[34] Image shapes are capable to construct and manipulate reality in an attempt to shape publics' imagery of a nation or its people. According to Chung-Shing Chan and Yunan Zhang,[35] perceived image is the output of people's emotional and reasoned interpretation of the projected image.

National image has conceptualized as an attitudinal construct, which implies a conglomeration of measurement variables including the assessment of the national economy, the training of citizens and citizens' work competency as well as the country's level of technological advancement.[36] It is within this conceptualization of the intricate association between culture, public diplomacy, and soft power that China's charm offensive in Africa and by extension Kenya, particularly through the CI must be conceptualized. The cultural diplomacy of China in Africa is a deliberate endeavor to shape public opinion and

public perception of Kenyans so that they can adopt a more favorable perception and attitudes towards China national image.

The CI is the clearest example of China's institutionalization and internationalization of cultural diplomacy of China.[37] The establishment of the CIs was conceived under the "Chinese Bridges Project" of CBP that had been initiated by China's State Council in 2004. The CIs were to revamp the erstwhile and relatively ineffective NOCFL or *Hanban.* The CBP had eight underpinning objectives for the *Hanban;* the overseas establishment of the CI, producing 'Great Wall Chinese' and 'Chengo Chinese' or the technology-based resources for teaching and learning Chinese language.[38]

In an actual sense, however, the CI is a partnership among the three bodies; CI headquarters (Hanban), a Chinese institution of higher learning or technical college and a foreign institution of higher learning.[39] The first CI was created in 2004 in Seoul, South Korea followed by another CI at the University of Maryland in the US.[40] Since it was launched, the CI has formed the agenda of the cultural diplomacy of China with the other countries in Asia and the rest of the world.

Anita Wheeler.[41] perceives a close resemblance between the CI and its German, French and Spanish equivalent *Goest Institut, Alliance France* and *Cervantes Institute*s which all aimed at spreading culture and language of their respective countries. In Africa, the CI has become the most perceptible instrument for China's cultural diplomacy. By the end of 2019, there were 54 and Africa had 33 Confucius classrooms.[42] The activities of the CI in African countries include the teaching of mandarin, organizing cultural exhibitions and cultural festivals which showcase the cultural material of China.

In this context it can be deduced that the projection of the cultural soft power of China has been CIs' central preoccupation. CIs' for cultural soft power projection is in line with that construed by the Chinese foreign policymakers as evidenced by the 17th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) of 2017.[43] The activities of the CI are also in line with China's concerted effort to establish an image of itself as a 'peaceful' country that aspires to a 'harmonious world' and a responsible country.[44] The mentality of the

[28]Nancy Snow, "U.S. Public Diplomacy: Its History, Problems, and Promise." In Jowett and O'Donnell, Readings in Propaganda and Persuasion: New and Classic Essays. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2005), 228.

[29] Cull, Op. Cit., 20

[30] F. Barghorn, The Soviet Cultural Offensive. The role of Cultural Diplomacy in Soviet Foreign Policy. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1960)

[31] Emil Gochaevich Adleiba and Vasil Timerjanovich Sakaev, "Cultural Diplomacy of France: Essence, Main Directions and Tools," Journal of Educational and Social Research, Volume 9, Number 4, (2019), 200

[32] Andrew O. Enaifoghe and Nthabiseng E. Makhutla, "Exploring Cultural Diplomacy as Soft Power through Cultural Communication Exports: A Model of Power for Promoting Peace and Security", African Journal of Gender, Society and Development, Volume 9, Number 3, (2020), 100

[33] Enaifoghe and Makhutla, Op. Cit, 100

[34] Walter Lippmann, Public opinion. (New York, NY: Free Press, 1922), 11

[35] Xiufang Li and Naren Chitty, "Reframing National Image: A Methodlogical Framework." Conflict and Communication Online, Volume 8, Number 2 (2009), 1

[36] Alexander Buhmann and Diana Ingenhoff, "Advancing the Country Image Construct From a Public Relations Perspective." Journal of Communication Management, Volume 19, Number 1, (2015), 62.

[37] Danielly Silva Ramos Becard and Paulo Menechelli Filho, "Chinese Cultural Diplomacy: Instruments in China's Strategy for International Insertion in the 21st Century." Rev. Bras. Polit. Int., Volume 62, Number 1, (2019), 6

[38] You, *Op. Cit.* 767

[39] Don Starr, "Chinese Language Education in Europe: The Confucius Institutes," *European Journal of Education,* Volume 44, Number 1, (2009), 69

[40] Becard and Filho, Op. cit. 6

[41] Anita Wheeler, Cultural Diplomacy, Language Planning, and the Case of the University of Nairobi Confucius Institute. Journal of Asian and African Studies, Volume 49, Number 1, (2013), 51

[42] Liu, Op. cit., 653

[43] Carola McGiffert. Chinese Soft Power and Its Implications for the United States: Competition and Cooperation in the Developing World, (Washington, D.C; Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2009), 16.

[44] Ibid.

policymakers in China behind the CI project seems to be that if foreign publics learnt Mandarin and became more acquainted with China's cultural material they would develop a more favuorable imagery of China. Kluver[45] posits that the CI are geopolitical network for the exercise of China's propaganda.

China's soft power projection through the CIs in Kenya is well documented and quite visible. Kenya has become a main locus for the cultural diplomacy of China in Africa and country has about quarter of CIs located in the continent.[46] On 19 December 2005, *Hanban* established a CI at the University of Nairobi (UON) in collaboration with Tianjin Normal University.[47] By 2015 there were four CI's in Kenya in partnership with Kenyan Universities. The CIs were established at Kenyatta University (KU), Egerton University (EU), and Moi University (MU), surpassing the African average by 2.[48] Table 1 shows the institution, the year of establishment and the Chinese partner institutions for the CIs in Kenya.

Table 4.3: CI in Kenya between 2005 and 2015

Kenyan Institution	Year Established	Chinese Partner Institutions
University of Nairobi (UON)	2005	Tianjin Normal University
Kenyatta University (KU)	2008	Shandong Normal University
Egerton University (EU)	2012	Nanjin Agricultural University
Moi University (MU)	2015	Donghua University

Source: Shoemaker[49]

This is not to mention that Kenya is the regional hub for Chinese state-owned international media firms including *China Daily, Xinhua News Agency,* China Radio International (CRI), and *Global Television Network (CGTN).*[50] These are also conveyer belts for Chinese culture in Kenya. Nevertheless, few scholars have examined the value of the CI for image cultivation in Kenya. More importantly, it is hard to account for the impact of CI on the Kenyan public's perception of China's image owing to inadequate sources of information on the same. It is this information gap that this article sort to bridge by sampling Kenyans and assessing their perception of China based on the interaction with or lack thereof with the CI.

III. METHOD

This research was a mixed methods research. It deployed a mix of quantitative and qualitative research methods. In line with this, it adopted descriptive and explanatory design; a hybrid approach that permitted not only describing the cultural diplomacy of China through the CI but also more importantly gaining insight and inferring the impact of CI on Kenyan's perception of China.

Qualitative research applies inductive methods in which the data that was collected was analyzed to arrive at conclusions. In line with this, the historical study was deployed to account for the pedigree and activities of CI in Kenya. The qualitative method for data analysis deployed was the thematic analysis (TA) which involved a critical review of the extant data set and identifying emergent patterns.[51] The quantitative research deployed a deductive approach in which causality is the ultimate concern. In this sense, it enabled the assessment of whether China's cultural diplomacy through the CI in Kenya, had an impact on Kenyan's view of China's image.

This research was conducted in Nairobi Kenya targeted all the residents in Nairobi. It deployed the purposive sampling technique by which it sampled a total of 400 individuals from ten clusters or cohorts; government ministries, media, private sector (informal business), private sector (formal business), universities, religious organizations, civil society, county government, security sector and political parties. The results indicate that CI has had a diminutive on the improvement of China's national. Thus, from each stratum, 40 individuals were targeted for participation in this research.

The method for data collection was through semi-structured questionnaires. The questionnaire comprised 35 questions and was subdivided into 3 thematic areas; Section A pertained to demographic information, Section B focused on China's public diplomacy efforts in Kenya, and Section C attended to Kenyan's perception of China's national image.

The researcher used the computerized questionnaire administration technique in which the questionnaires were emailed to participants, the drop-and-pick (paper-and-pencil) technique approach in which the questionnaires were presented to the participants on paper, and the technique and the face-to-face questionnaire administration technique in which the questions were orally presented to the participants.

The data was analyzed qualitatively and empirically. The qualitative approach used involved content analysis and this was directed at the responses to the qualitative questions in the questionnaire. The empirical analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) and focused on the Likert scale questions contained in the questionnaire. The output for the analysis involved frequency tables and bar graphs. The response rate for the research was 83 per cent given that 332 people fully participated out of the 400 that were targeted. This response rate was sufficient, given that Morton, Bandara, Robinson and Carr[52] have argued that a response rate exceeding 60 per cent is sufficient.

[45] Randolph Kluver, The sage as strategy: Nodes, networks, and the quest for geopolitical power in the Confucius Institutes", Communication, Culture & Critique, 7(2), (2014), 192–209

[46] Ibid. 65

[47] Wheeler, Op. cit., 52

[48] Shoemaker, Op. cit., 39

[49] Ibid. 40

[50] Wu, Op. cit. 13 -14

[51] Lorelli S. Nowell, Jill M. Norris, Deborah E. White and Nancy J. Moules, "Thematic Analysis: Striving to Meet the Trustworthiness Criteria", *International Journal of Qualitative Methods,* Volume 16, (2017), 1 – 13.

[52] Susan M. B. Morton, Dinusha K. Bandara, Elizabeth M. Robinson,and Polly E. Atatoa Carr, "In the 21st Century, What is a an Acceptable Response Rate," *Australian N. Z. J. Public Health,* Volume 36, Number 2, 106 – 108.

IV. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

This article sampled 400 Kenyans to assess how the CI has impacted their perception of China's national image. The results revealed that there little impact of the CI on Kenyan public's perception of China's national image. More than half of the participants 63.5 per cent had heard of the CI, 25.5 per cent had not heard of the CI and 11 were moderate. Most of than half of the participants, 74.1 per cent had not attended the CI and 35.9 had attended the institutions. It was found that more than half of the participants, 78.6 per cent had no Mandarin competencies, 5.7 were competent in Mandarin and the rest 15.7 per cent were unsure.

Most of the respondents, nearly half (45.8 percent) thought that the CIs in Kenya had the ability to educate Kenyans on Chinese culture. Twenty-eight-point-four per cent disagreed and a significant number, 26.2 per cent were moderate. Half of the respondents, 50.6 per cent considered the CI to be instruments for expanding China's economic interest in Kenya, 23.5 per cent disagreed and 25.9 per cent were moderate. Thirty-nine-point-five per cent of the participants considered the CI to be tools for Chinese propaganda, 38.6 per cent disagreed with this view and 22 per cent were unsure.

It was found that 32.5 per cent of the respondents lacked emotional bonds with Chinese culture compared to 22.3 per cent who indicated they had an emotional bond with China while the rest of the respondents, 13 per cent were moderate. Slightly more than half of the respondents 54.1 indicated they did not like Chinese culture, 10 were moderate and 35.9 indicated they liked Chinese culture. About half of the respondents, 50.6 thought China was a lovable country, 40.1 disagreed and 9.3 were moderate. When asked whether they saw China's presence in Kenya as a good thing, 62 per cent disagreed, 11.4 were moderate and 26.6 per cent agreed. More than half of the respondents, 53.5 indicated they did not view of China favorably, 3.3 were moderate and 43.2 per cent had favorable view of China. The results are as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Kenyan's Perception of CI and the National Image of China

Statement	Responses in scale of 1-5				
	SD	D	M	A	SA
Ever heard of CI	3.3	22.2	11	54.1	9.4
Ever attended or attending CI	19.8	44.3	0	4.6	31.3
Competent in mandarin	59.9	18.7	15.7	3.6	2.1
CI's ability to educate on Chinese culture	13.6	14.8	26.2	22.9	22.9
Perception of CI-China's economic interest link	9.3	14.2	25.9	22.7	28.9
CI as a propaganda tool for CPC	14.5	24.1	22	16.3	23.2
Emotional bond with Chinese culture	32.5	22	13	10.2	22.3
Like Chinese culture (art, food, music, movies, language)	9.8	44.3	10	4.6	31.3
China is a lovable country	25.9	14.2	9.3	22.7	28.9
China's presence good for Kenya	32.5	29.5	11.4	19.4	7.2
Have favourable view of China	44.1	9.4	3.3	21	22.2

V. DISCUSSIONS

The cultural diplomacy of China in Kenya through the CIs has been aimed at shaping Kenyan's perception towards the Chinese culture and China's national image favorably. The review of the extant literature on CI activities has revealed that Kenya had been a principal focus of cultural soft power projection for China in the African region. Kenya hosts over a quarter of CIs in sub-Saharan Africa.[53] The activities of the CI include teaching of mandarin, organizing cultural exhibitions and cultural festivals which showcase China's cultural material.[54]

The aim of the CI is three-fold; disseminate Chinese language abroad, promote an understanding of China's cultural values, and present a "correct" image of China.[55] These activities and aims attendant to the CI form the basis for the determination of the success of the CI but the latter is especially crucial for this article, that is, whether the CI have influenced Kenyan public perception of China's image.

Based on the survey results, it can be assumed that CI is relatively popular in Kenya given that close to three-quarters of participants had heard of them. Nonetheless, and what is worrying in that Kenyan publics attendance of the CI is quite low with close to two-thirds of Kenyan public not having attended or attending the CIs. This means that the extent to which these cultural centers can shape Kenyan publics' perception is limited for how else can they influence Kenyans view of China if Kenyans are not attending or interacting with them. Language is crucial element of a culture according to Hofstede[56] and it is the major focus of the CI according to the CBP.[57] Therefore, the CI must at least spread Mandarin for it to be able to meet the other goals of cultural diplomacy. Nevertheless, more than two-thirds of the sampled Kenyans do not have Mandarin language competency.

This is probably why only a slightly greater number of the participants thought the CI in Kenya lacked the ability to educate Kenyans on Chinese culture. More importantly, most Kenyans that participated in this research consider that CI is a tool for the expansion of China's interests in Kenya. This finding is contrary to Jennifer G. Cooke's[58] assertion that Africans have a general positive of China's influence on the continent.

Additionally, a significant number of participants deem the CI as a propaganda tool for the CPC. This finding is crucial

[53] Kluver, Op. Cit. 192–209
[54] Wheeler, Op. Cit., 52
[55] Hartig, Op. Cit. 63
[56] Hofstede, Op. CIt. 3 – 26
[57] You, Op. Cit. 767
[58] Jennifer G. Cooke, Chapter 3: China's Soft Power in Africa. (Center for Strategic & International Studies, CISIS, 2009), p.1.

because it confirms Sahlin's assertion that the CI is mostly considered as China's propaganda instrument.[59] It is perhaps for this reason that this research found that most Kenyan public lacked an emotional bond with the Chinese culture.

Therefore, what all these findings point to is the unsuccessfulness of China's CI in favourably shaping Kenyan's perception of China. Indeed this is confirmed when more than half of those interviewed mentioned that they did not like Chinese culture. While a significant number of the Kenyan public who participated in this research, about half thought China was a lovable country a significant number thought otherwise, and this could point to the inefficacy of the CI. Most Kenyans view China's presence in Kenya as bad for Kenya and most do not view China favorably despite the intensification of China's cultural presence in Kenya through the CI.

VI. CONCLUSION

This article examined the impact of China's image cultivation through the CI in Kenya. It pivoted on the soft power model and applied a mixed methods approach that integrated elements of interpretivist and positivist techniques. It centered on assessing whether the CIs in Kenya had generated a positive perception of China's national image among Kenyan publics. The research results indicated that Kenyan publics held a pessimistic view of China notwithstanding the fact that Kenya has been a key focus of China's public diplomacy. Kenya has about a quarter of the CI on the content, which translates to more than two by African average.

The survey results indicated that very few Kenyans had attended or interacted with the CIs operating in Kenya and there was a general accord among the respondents that the CI had not influenced how they perceived China. This article found that Kenyan public remains skeptical about the CI and a significant number consider them as tools for China's propaganda geared towards expanding China's influence in Kenya's economic and political environment. This therefore suggests that the China needs to rethink and redesign the CI approach and programs to enhance its reach among Kenyans and to transform Kenyans view of the CI themselves for the CI to have any significant impact in shaping Kenyan publics' perception about China more favorably.

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